

RTP GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines

Since the mid 1970s, with the passage of AB 69, (Chapter 1253, Statutes of 1972) state law has required the preparation of Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) to address transportation issues and assist local and state decision makers shape California's transportation infrastructure. In addition, Government Code 14522 requires that the California Transportation Commission (CTC) develop Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Guidelines to aid in the preparation and utilization of the RTPs.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to:

- Promote an integrated, statewide, multimodal, regional transportation planning process;
- Set forth a uniform transportation planning framework throughout California;
- Promote a transportation planning process that facilitates decision-making;
- Promote a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process that facilitates the rapid and efficient development and implementation of projects while maintaining California's commitment to public health and environmental quality; and
- Promote a planning process that considers the views of all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

The RTP Guidelines are written to provide each Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) with the flexibility to meet the distinctive transportation needs of their region. While these Guidelines identify both State and federal planning requirements, the Guidelines themselves are advisory.

As most of the transportation planning detail is advisory, it has been placed in the appendices. This further allows each region additional flexibility to select planning options that best fit their regional transportation planning needs.

The Guidelines also include recommendations for including documentation needed to meet project eligibility requirements for inclusion in both the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP).

B. Background of the Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines

The RTP Guidelines were first adopted by the California Transportation Commission in May 1978 and subsequently revised in August 1978, December 1982, October 1987, July 1991, December 1992, and November 1994.

The latest revision to the Guidelines, in November 1994, was prepared to achieve conformance with transportation planning legislation, specifically the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and SB 1435 (Kopp) implementing ISTEA in California.

Superceding ISTEA, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) was signed into law in 1998. Together with TEA 21, SB 45 (Chapter 622 Statutes 1977) produced significant changes in transportation, impacting many areas of planning, programming, funding and project development. These RTP Guidelines reflect the new transportation planning requirements brought about by both TEA 21 and SB 45.

TEA 21 continues the shift in federal transportation policy away from reliance on roads and motor vehicles to a multimodal approach. A list of TEA 21 and SB 45 impacts on the regional transportation planning process are listed in Appendix D, pages 1 and 2.

In addition, numerous Federal regulations pertain to the transportation planning processes, including: Metropolitan Planning (23 CFR 450), under TEA 21, and EPA's Transportation Conformity (Air Quality) (40 CFR 51 and 40 CFR 93) under the Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The Transportation Conformity rules require demonstration that the transportation system in any nonattainment area contributes both to the improvement and attainment of regional air quality standards.

C. Regional Transportation Planning Agencies

RTPAs have the responsibility of developing both the RTPs and the Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIPs) to implement these plans.

There are 43 RTPAs designated by the State. Of these 43 RTPAs, 16 are Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)s that are federally recognized and federally funded and, have the responsibility for transportation planning and programming in urbanized areas with a population in excess of 50,000. The 29 non-urban RTPAs are funded primarily with State funds. Two MPOs, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) and the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) are not RTPAs but planning organizations. They both receive federal recognition and AMBAG receives federal funding but neither has access to direct state transportation funding support. TMPO is structured to be a policy-making body and not empowered to enter into contracts or receive grants.

D. Purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan

RTPs are planning documents developed by RTPAs and MPOs in cooperation with Caltrans and other stakeholders. They are required to be developed as per State legislation, Government Code Section 65080 et seq., of Chapter 2.5 and federal legislation, U.S. Code, Title 23, Sections 134 and 135 et seq.

The plans are developed to provide a clear vision of the regional transportation goals, policies, objectives and strategies. This vision must be realistic and be within fiscal constraints. In addition to providing a vision, the RTPs have many specific functions, including:

- Providing an assessment of the current modes of transportation and the potential of new travel options within the region;
- Predicting the future needs for travel and goods movement;

- Identification and documentation of specific actions necessary to address the region's mobility and accessibility needs;
- Identification of guidance and documentation of public policy decisions by local, regional, state and federal officials regarding transportation expenditures and financing;
- Identification of needed transportation improvements, in sufficient detail, to serve as a foundation for the:
 - ◆ Development of the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP);
 - ◆ Facilitation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)/404 integration process decisions;
 - ◆ Identification of project purpose and needs;
 - ◆ Development of an estimate of emissions impacts for demonstrating conformity with the air quality standards identified in the State Implementation Plan (SIP).
- Promotion of consistency between the California Transportation Plan, the regional transportation plan and other transportation plans developed by cities, counties, districts, private organizations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies in responding to statewide and interregional transportation issues and needs;
- Providing a forum for; (1) participation and cooperation and (2) to facilitate partnerships that reconcile transportation issues which transcend regional boundaries and;
- Involving the public, federal, State and local agencies, as well as local elected officials, early in the transportation planning process so as to include them in discussions and decisions on the social, economic, air quality and environmental issues related to transportation.

E. Requirements of Law

These Guidelines are intended to provide guidance so that RTPAs can develop their RTPs with confidence so that they will be consistent with federal and state transportation planning requirements. This is important because SB 45 requires the RTPs serve as the foundation of the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The CTC cannot program projects that are not identified in the RTP.

The Guidelines continue to use the words “shall” and “should”, a convention established by the previous Guidelines. Where the Guidelines reflect a state or federal statutory or regulatory requirement, the word

“shall” is used with statutory or regulatory citation. Where the Guidelines reflect content recommended by the CTC, the word “should” is used.

State planning requirements apply to all RTPAs including those designated as MPOs. Federal planning regulations apply only to MPOs. However, federal Air Quality legislation and regulations apply to all RTPAs. Regardless of the source of the transportation planning funds, funding for specific transportation projects may be of State or federal origin.

Federal Clean Air Act conformity requirements apply in all nonattainment areas. However, only the MPOs and the US Department of Transportation can make conformity determinations. Therefore, a non-MPO plan does not require a conformity determination for nonattainment areas. Regional conformity must still be demonstrated before regionally significant transportation projects can proceed. In some cases, the non-MPO RTP may need to be coordinated with, and a conformity determination prepared or processed by, an adjacent MPO in order to comply with the Transportation Conformity regulations. Applicable state and federal regulations are identified in Appendix B.

F. Regional Transportation Plan Components

The development of the RTP is based upon State and federal statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as the CTC recommendations. As per State law, each transportation planning agency shall (Government Code 65080) prepare and adopt a RTP directed at achieving a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system, including, but not limited to, mass transportation, highway, railroad, maritime, bicycle, pedestrian, goods movement, and aviation facilities and services. In addition, the RTP shall (Government Code 65080) be action oriented and pragmatic, considering both the short-term and long-term time periods.

The RTP shall (Government Code 65080) include the following components:

- A Policy Element – The Policy Element reflects the mobility goals, policies and objectives of the region.
- An Action Element – The Action Element identifies programs and actions to implement the RTP.
- A Financial Element – The Financial Element summarizes the cost of implementing the projects in the RTP considering a financially constrained environment.

The RTP should include the following:

- Executive Summary – An Executive Summary of the RTP as an introductory chapter. The Executive Summary should provide a regional perspective, and identify the challenges and transportation objectives to be achieved.
- Needs Assessment – An identification of needs to facilitate project development. Part of this assessment should be transportation performance objectives and anticipated outcomes.

- Reference to regional environmental issues and air quality documentation needs.

The RTP should be internally consistent and clearly describe the planning assumptions and methodology used to analyze and prioritize transportation improvements.

All projects should clearly flow from the Policy, Action and Financial Elements of the RTP. In addition, the RTP should acknowledge and reflect external consistency with other adopted plans and programs that impact the regional transportation system. These plans and programs include, but are not limited to, the State Implementation Plan (SIP), the Congestion Management Programs (CMP) (if applicable), local land use plans, and the California Transportation Plan.

State statutes require (Government Code 65080) each transportation planning agency to consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the transportation plans of cities, counties, districts, private organizations, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies. In addition, the RTP shall (Government Code 65080(c)) demonstrate consistency with federal and other planning and programming requirements. By the same statutes, the RTPs of the MPOs are required (Government Code 65080.5) to consider the seven planning factors specified in Title 23, Section 134 (f) of the U.S. Code. (See Appendix B, page B-6.) SB 45 specifies that projects included in the ITIP be coordinated with the RTPA and be consistent with the RTP.

Federal Statutes require that the RTP of the MPO shall (Title 23, CFR Sec.450.316(b)(2)) be consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and that the RTP of the MPOs shall (Title 23, CFR Sec. 450.316(b)(3)) identify actions necessary to meet the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

In terms of transportation impacts, the RTPs of the MPOs shall (Title 23, CFR Sec. 450.316(a)(4) and (13)) provide an analysis of and consider the likely social and environmental effects upon; housing, employment, community development, land use, central city development goals, etc.

Federal regulations specify specific time frames. The RTPs of the MPOs shall (Title 40 CFR Sec 93.106) have a short term (10 year) time horizon and a long term (20 year) time horizon.

Air Quality is a major consideration in the development of all RTPs. Federal legislation requires that the RTP shall (Title 42, Sec. 7506(c)(2)), (Title 40, CFR Sec. 93.100-128), and (Title 23, CFR Sec. 450.322(d)) conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP), demonstrated by meeting conformity to emissions levels (budgets) where they apply, to meeting other emissions tests as they apply and by implementing transportation control measures as required by the SIP. In serious and worse nonattainment areas, land use and growth assumptions shall (Title 40, CFR Sec. 93.122(b)) be documented and compared with historical trends and must show consistency between transportation alternatives and land use projections for different options.

G. Updating the Regional Transportation Plan

Regional transportation planning is a dynamic process requiring continuous monitoring and periodic updating. Each RTPA shall (Government Code 65080(c)) adopt and submit, every three years beginning by September 1, 2001, an updated RTP to the CTC and Caltrans. An RTPA that does not contain an urbanized area may at its option adopt and submit an RTP once every four years beginning by September 1, 2001. If an RTPA determines that the current RTP is adequate and that an update is not warranted, the RTPA may readopt the current RTP.

To qualify for funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), projects included in an RTIP or the ITIP must be consistent with adopted RTPs. Given the requirements of Government Code 65080(c), the CTC will only consider STIP funding for projects consistent with an RTP adopted within three years (four years in non-urban regions) of STIP adoption.

Federal Transportation Conformity rules require a new conformity determination at not more than 3-year intervals. Other, shorter deadlines for new conformity determinations may also apply based on various EPA actions including nonattainment designation or classification changes, SIP approvals, emission budget approvals, and changes in modeling assumptions. These requirements are separate from the RTP adoption schedule, but can affect it. When the RTP is updated or amended, a new conformity determination, where applicable, shall (Title 40, CFR Sec. 93.102) and (Title 23, CFR Sec. 450.322(d)) be made.